

VZCZCXRO9513  
RR RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHNP RUEHROV RUEHSL RUEHSR  
DE RUEHPG #0711/01 3411455  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 071455Z DEC 09  
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1991  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRAGUE 000711

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/07/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EZ](#)

SUBJECT: NO SURPRISES AS TWO SMALLER PARTIES ELECT LEADERS

REF: PRAGUE 453

Classified By: CDA Mary Thompson-Jones for reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) There were no surprises during the recent TOP 09 and the Green Party congresses. TOP 09 delegates unanimously chose Karel Schwarzenberg as their party chairman, and the Green Party elected Ondrej Liska as its leader. Polls have consistently shown TOP 09 gaining votes (at the expense of the Greens and ODS) and gaining momentum to overtake the Communists as the third strongest party. The Green Party, in comparison, is imploding, following an abysmal performance in the European Parliament elections in June 2009, and it appears unlikely that it will make it into the Parliament in the May 2010 elections. TOP 09 has supplanted the Greens as the viable party for disaffected left and right-of-center voters and is a natural coalition partner of the right-of-center Civic Democrats (ODS). A coalition of TOP 09, ODS and the Christian Democrats (KDU-CSL) would bode well for U.S. policy, as all three of these parties promote a strong trans-Atlantic relationship and TOP 09 leadership is favorable to the U.S. End Summary.

-----  
TOP 09  
-----

2. (SBU) Miroslav Kalousek conceived the Czech Republic's newest party, TOP 09, after the downfall of Mirek Topolanek's government in March 2009 (Reftel). TOP 09 was formally registered in June and held its first party congress on November 28, unanimously electing former Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg as its party Chairman and former Finance Minister Miroslav Kalousek as the First Deputy Chairman. Schwarzenberg ran unopposed and received 163 out of 164 votes - he reportedly did not vote for himself. Kalousek also received all votes but his own. The TOP 09 congress was held strictly to endorse its leadership and a platform was not formally discussed, although Schwarzenberg and Kalousek have consistently called for fiscal restraint and strict control of budget deficits as policy priorities. Schwarzenberg and Kalousek also believe in a strong trans-Atlantic relationship and see energy security as a particular area of concern. Over the course of just a few months, TOP 09 has emerged as a viable alternative for right-of-center voters disillusioned with ODS leadership and behavior (especially over corruption) and left-of-center voters trying to block CSSD Chairman Jiri Paroubek.

-----  
The Green Party  
-----

3. (SBU) The Green Party was founded in 1990 and had some early success, sending three members to Parliament in 1992. Since then, they struggled until Martin Bursik took over as party Chairman and led the Greens to parliamentary success in the 2006 elections, in which the Greens won six seats in Parliament. Electoral gridlock and a coalition stalemate eventually resulted in the Greens participating in a center-right coalition government with ODS and KDU-CSL and

gaining four ministerial positions. Ironically, TOP 09's Karel Schwarzenberg, though not a member of the Green Party, became Foreign Minister under this coalition government as a Green Party candidate. The Greens chose their party chairman, Martin Bursik, as Minister of Environment and Ondrej Liska, deputy chairman, as Minister of Education.

¶4. (C) A split in the party and a disastrous showing in the June 2009 European Parliament elections caused party leader Martin Bursik to step down as Chairman right after the EU elections. Ondrej Liska was appointed party Chairman and spent the first 45 days of his tenure trying to unify the party. His efforts have been somewhat successful. At the Green Party congress on December 5, Liska was elected the Green Party Chairman by a vote of 170 out of 252. Czech Television's lead political analyst, Jindrich Sidlo, told Poloff that, although an endorsement of Liska, the vote shows the continuing and consistent ideological split in the party. Roughly two-thirds are realistic pragmatists who believe the party needs to be involved in government to promote the green agenda, while roughly one-third are dogmatic idealists who believe the party should push its agenda from outside the government. As Chairman, Liska laid out his party's priorities: combating corruption through campaign finance reform and tightening public tender regulations; promoting a pro-EU policy; and keeping the Communists out of government. The Greens also believe that energy security is a priority and are no longer categorically opposed to nuclear energy.

¶5. (C) Ondrej Liska told Poloff that, even if the Greens do not make it into the Parliament in May, they are "in it for the long run." They will continue to engage on issues

PRAGUE 00000711 002 OF 002

important to the Greens and will seek to gain electoral representation in the Senate and local elections in 2010. Money, however, will be an issue. The Greens are living on state money as loans become impossible to secure as long as the Greens show little chance of winning seats in Parliament. Martin Bursik, the charismatic former Green Chairman, has also hinted at remaining in politics but his role is still unclear. Sidlo told Poloff that, according to his sources in the Greens, Bursik will not challenge Liska for leadership of the Greens in the future but will still run in the same multi-seat Prague district as Schwarzenberg. If he fails to gain a seat, which is likely, Sidlo thinks Bursik may leave the Greens and join a more viable party, perhaps ODS.

-----  
TOP 09 Supplanting the Greens  
-----

¶6. (SBU) The Green Party gained support from voters who are dissatisfied with the leadership and behavior of the right-of-center Civic Democrats (ODS) and dislike Jiri Paroubek from the Social Democrats (CSSD). Although the Greens won 6.3 percent of the vote in the 2006 parliamentary elections, their performance in the European Parliament elections and the internal bickering has caused their support to dissipate. The Greens now consistently poll around three percent and are losing the protest vote to TOP 09. No political analyst with whom we have spoken believes that the Greens will cross the five percent threshold to make it into the Parliament next May. TOP 09, however, is polling between ten and fourteen percent and could supplant the Communists as the Czech Republic's third largest party.

-----  
And Possibly the Communists  
-----

¶7. (C) Comment. In all likelihood, the May 2010 elections will result in five parties making it to the Parliament. If current trends continue, TOP 09 will supplant the Communists as the third strongest party. A poll by SANEP released on December 7 showed that CSSD would finish slightly ahead of

ODS, with CSSD getting 26.3 (68 seats) percent of the vote and ODS with 23.6 percent (58 seats). TOP 09 garnered 13.9 percent (34 seats) in this poll, exceeding the Communist Party (KSCM), which got 11.2 percent (28 seats). The Christian Democrats eked out 5 percent in the poll (12 seats), just enough to keep them in Parliament. Under this scenario, a right-of-center coalition of ODS, TOP 09 and KDU-CSL would have 104 seats in the Parliament and enough to form a relatively weak governing coalition. All three of these parties support a strong trans-Atlantic relationship. Karel Schwarzenberg would drive the foreign policy of TOP 09 and he would promote a robust and realistic strategic partnership with the U.S. Most other polls, however, show these three parties short of a majority, leaving a grand coalition of CSSD-ODS, an unlikely CSSD-Communist coalition, or a CSSD minority government in silent coalition with the Communists as the only viable options. End Comment.

Thompson-Jones